

IN THIS ISSUE

An Article on Articles

By Craig Frank

Page 2

Creating an Online Marketing Plan

By David Gilad

Page 4

Marketing With Postcards

By Ofer Kahane

Page 7

Creating Great Advertisements

By Ilan Sarid

Page 10

Choosing a Domain Name

By David Feingersch

Page 12



FEATURES

AN ARTICLE ON ARTICLES

There are compelling business reasons to write articles. They serve as a means of communicating thoughts and ideas on business issues. They also help establish the author as a recognized and (depending on the quality of the articles) respected person in the local (and perhaps extended) business community. Most importantly, articles can serve, if distributed or published properly, as a...

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DULY QUOTED

"The vision must be followed by the venture. It is not enough to stare up the steps - we must step up the stairs".

- Vance Havne

WISH WE SAID IT

"Success is going from failure to failure without a loss of enthusiasm".

- Winston Churchill

THOUGHT OF THE MONTH

Stifling Debate

There are some who believe that dissent is a challenge to the homogeneity of a group or its plans. They see the dissenting party as a nay-sayer - someone injecting a negative vibe into what might otherwise be a positive environment. Certainly there are times when this is actually the case.

The other possibility is that the dissent is justified because the group or its plan is somehow flawed and in need of improvement. The dissenting party may merely be engaged in an effort to push the others involved to greater excellence, hoping that through the criticism being voiced, the urge to respond and rectify will be found.

Assuming the aim is true and the dissenting party is only seeking to encourage the remedy of flaws he/she recognizes. The communication of those flaws - in how it is transmitted - is equally as important as the validity of the comments. The dynamics of a group intent on moving forward and excited by the conclusions they have reached can make the introduction of criticism a tricky and delicate situation. The advice (criticisms) cannot be heard and will not be acted upon if the group responds defensively, as opposed to willingly.

The responsibility for making the introduction of criticism palatable falls primarily on the person seeking to share the challenging views. The old adage that it is not what you say, but how you say it, comes into play. However, this does not remove all responsibility from the receiving party - meaning that they too have to be open enough and receptive enough to the idea that their plan may have room for improvement and be eager to hear suggestions for how to make it even better.

If the very idea of dissent is anathema to the group or the level of confidence (or arrogance) is such that there is no room for suggestion opportunities for improvement, then the chances of reaching maximum excellence is diminished. The idea that there is always room for improvement is healthy, and the search for ways to that improvement is wise.

The old expression, don't shoot the messenger needs to be heeded when a critical statement is presented. By allowing the discussion to flow and working through the negative comments, you may find the results to be actually quite positive.





AN ARTICLE ON ARTICLES

By Craig R. Frank

There are compelling business reasons to write articles. They serve as a means of communicating thoughts and ideas on business issues. They also help establish the author as a recognized and (depending on the quality of the articles) respected person in the local (and perhaps extended) business community. Most importantly, articles can serve, if distributed or published properly, as a key means of establishing a perception of expertise that draw clients seeking to engage the knowledge the articles have demonstrated.

After 51/2 years of publishing the Tudog newsletter and articles placed in magazines in publications around the world (Israel, U.K., U.S., Romania, and Guatemala), the power and the prestige of the article has become abundantly clear to us. The article can bring attention, respect and opportunity....if well composed.

Beyond the free advertising benefits of the article is the chance it gives to actually say something that may be compelling and useful to your audience. This earns not only their admiration, but also their gratitude. Your article becomes a point of reference, and you, as the author, become a valuable source of information and know-how.

So the question becomes; what makes a good article and how do you get yours read? Tudog has 10 thoughts to share. They are:

1. **Select Your Topics Carefully** – the purpose of your articles is to serve the needs of your audience, to provide them with information that they will find useful and necessary in the course of their businesses. You want your articles to provide answers to questions they might have, help solve challenges they might face, or encourage thoughts or actions they might need to consider taking. Your articles can be helpful or opinion oriented, or a little of both, but under all circumstances they need to be engaging and have a clear purpose.
2. **Get Off to a Strong Start** – the rules of journalism have always been that you need to grab your audience from the very beginning with a strong start, something said at the onset that makes the reader want to keep reading. The idea that the business article is there for the benefit of the reader and that purpose is motivation enough for the reader to continue on is incorrect. As with any sort of published piece, if you want the reader to read it (and you do because the article is serving a benefit to you as well) you need to make certain the start of the article is strong enough to drive the reader to the end.

3. **Keep it Personal** – once a reader begins reading your article a relationship is developed between you and him/her. It is a good relationship to have. Make sure your articles build on that relationship by keeping the pronouns personal and by allowing each reader to sense that you are talking directly to him/her (not them).

4. **Structure Properly** – the rules of good writing to not get thrown out the window just because you are writing an article that you believe contains information that is useful and helpful to the reader. You still need to compose your article in a reasonable and coherent way, with your thoughts well presented in a logical way. Even if you have the most profound thoughts ever, they will never be digested and understood if they are delivered in a random or illogical manner. Be clear in your thoughts and fluid in your writing.

5. **Support Your Contentions** – it isn't enough that you have spent hours pondering the worthiness of your views and developing your argument into a well formatted essay. You need to support your contentions in ways people can understand, either by using examples for the real world or presenting circumstances you are relatively certain we have all experienced. The ability to tie your thoughts to what your audience also experiences will serve to strengthen the relationship between author and reader and validate your contentions.

6. **Keep it Simple** – your article is not the opportunity to show people how smart you are, which fancy words you know, or how academic you can be. If you make your readers run to the dictionary every paragraph they will most likely opt to stop reading. Your article is there as a service and nobody wants to (or should need to) work too hard to get the information you have to share. Share it willingly and easily by keeping it simple.

7. **Include Action Items** – there are articles that speak in general terms or seek to share know-how and there are article that provide concrete “to-do” items that empower the reader by giving him/her the actual recipe for the solution being offered. The “10 Step” approach has become a bit bubble gum in its presentation, but it is still the most effective because it provides genuine action items that can (and should) be taken. Just make sure you don't force the 10. It's okay to have less (or more) steps to offer, as long as each one is truly useful.

8. **End Strong** – the beginning is strong to make people read on. The middle is strong because it is the meat of your message. The end needs to be strong because it is the final word and dictates how people will ultimately feel about your article. Think about it – the ending is the final impression and just as we judge on the first impression, we reinforce by the final one. Your ending needs to be strong so that your message can linger. Use a paragraph or two to sum up (not repeat) what your article said, and do so in a clever way.

All said and told your article is an advertisement for you and your company. You want it to reflect how smart and professional you are, but also how human and real you are. In most cases we cannot help but write in ways that reflect our personalities, and this is good because it means the articles will be an honest representation of who you are and what you think. You get into trouble when you try to be someone else. Write the article because you have something to say, and get it published because you think it is worthy of being read.

That alone is a powerful statement.

Craig Frank is Tudog's CEO.



CREATING AN ONLINE MARKETING PLAN

By David Gilad

The Internet may just be the most powerful marketing tool ever created for the small and medium sized enterprise because it enables, with a relatively simple set of tools and actions, the enhancement of brand, the increase in name recognition, and the expansion into geographical areas placed off limits by other marketing parameters. The Internet opens up a whole new world of options, and in order to take advantage of its potential you will need an online marketing plan. This article shows you what that is and how to create one.

The general purpose of an inline marketing plan mirrors those of the more traditional marketing plan – to establish the aims and tactics to be incorporated into your marketing program so that implementation can be eased and measured. The online plan only differs in the channel through which the marketing will be cast, as well s some of the tactics that will be deployed. The online environment differs from the traditional (offline) world in how viewers interact with communications, when they are exposed, and how they are called to action. These differences are typically advantages in the online setting, although the success with which you implement has a great deal to do with your return on investment.

Tudog has 10 tips to provide for the development and execution of an excellent online marketing plan. They are:

1. **Set Clear Objectives** – as with every marketing plan, you need to know what you want to accomplish before you set out to meet your goals. The setting of clear objectives will help you choose your tactics and allow you to measure performance. Your online presence can serve as a channel to communicate with customers, find new customers, sell products directly, or control aspects of your operations. Which of these makes sense for your company is a matter of objective. Be clear in your objective and you'll be able to better direct the content and look of your web presence.
2. **Have a Simple Process** – whatever you expect to achieve via online marketing, make certain that the process you use, as it interacts with your website, is simple. The use of promotional codes, the placement of new products, the merchandising of products, and the process of payment all need to be simple enough to encourage people to engage and remain interactive with your website. The marketing plan needs to set the

tone for this simplicity by making certain that the campaigns it calls for are consistent with the ability of the website to keep them simple.

3. Know Your Competition – any marketing plan has to take into consideration what the competition is doing – and also what the competition might do. There may be some things (features, functions, offerings) that your competitors are doing that are therefore competitive imperatives for you and without them you will be unable to compete as your website or offer will be inferior. There are also things you may want to do to offset your competitors or keep them off balance. In these cases you need to consider how your competitors may react to your proactive moves and whether you have the depth and resources to either stifle their response or offer up a reply of your own. When considering your competitors in the online environment it is also important to remember how easy it is for someone to go to your competitor's site (just a click away). So you need to make sure you establish and maintain an edge.

4. Know Your Customer – one of the most common errors companies bring into their online marketing scheme is a broadening of their core market. While it is true that the Internet provides wider access, the stronger marketing plans will call for wider access within the context of the core target market. Just because you can reach everyone doesn't mean you should. You still need to figure out who is most suited to wanting or needing your product or service and then market directly to them. The Internet will allow you a larger territory, but not necessarily most subsections in your target.

5. Know Your Purpose – the core driver in the traditional market is need or desire. This does not change just because you are marketing online. Your product needs to either solve a problem or provide a benefit in order for it to be compelling. Your online marketing plan needs to determine ways you can communicate this within the online environment.

6. Be True to Your Brand – another common error in online marketing is the belief that the brand so carefully crafted in the traditional market does not need to be carried over into the online world. The traditional marketing and online world are not two parallel universes existing independent of one another. They are two heavily intertwined spheres that require consistency between them. Your brand needs to be kept whole and any effort in digressing from it will result in dilution of your brand both online and off.

7. Keep True to General Marketing Principles – the idea that you are an online entity and therefore can cut corners on some of the fundamentals of marketing is incorrect and dangerous. If anything, being online means you need to be more diligent because there are fewer channels available to adjust or correct errors. This means that your website needs to be close to perfect as possible. You need to make sure your navigation is simple and clear, your graphics are solid, consistent and inviting, and your merchandising informative and appealing. You need to make sure your ads are communicative and enticing, and your placement is well conceived and presented.

8. Prepare Your Strategy – once again, the core discipline of marketing does not get diminished just because your focus is now on the Internet. You need to make certain you have identified your primary strategies and have created the mechanisms and tactics required to drive implementation. For example, if one of your core strategies for traffic generation is Search Engine Optimization, you need to be certain that you have constructed the website according to SEO best practices to afford your site as much organic placement as possible. Then you need to make certain you secure the keywords necessary for an effective pay-per-click campaign, thereby giving your company an integrated approach to online search engine lead generation. Without the strategy, and the tactics and resources to support it, your online presence will merely linger in cyberspace.

9. **Leverage Technology** – not only is the Internet a technology based environment, but the use of outdated technologies can leave you at a significant disadvantage as you will lack the latest features for your visitors and latest tools for your analytics. Gaining access to the latest technologies is often as simple as upgrading your hosting package to include additional capabilities. It is wise to review what is available and make certain that you are maximizing your opportunities.

10. **Don't Forget Your People** – the online environment can give the impression of being somewhat automated, leaving you to underestimate the huge contribution your team is delivering to your overall online success. As with any other aspect of your business, the people you have driving your results will determine what those results are. Make certain you remember how important they are, and take the time to remind and reward them.

The emergence of the Internet of a primary channel for attracting customers and conducting business has created the need for every company to have an online marketing program. The foundation of this is the marketing plan which, when planned and executed properly, can drive results, lifting sales and improving your company's overall performance and value.

David Gilad serves on Tudog's Board of Directors



MARKETING WITH POSTCARDS

By Ofer Kahane

There is always a conflict between the need to keep in front of your customers and the work and cost that goes into a constant awareness program. The need to balance the cost and benefit has led most companies to conclude that an occasional exposure suffices, even though they know that a more concentrated campaign is more effective. Even when the cost of such a campaign is neutralized (after all there is an ROI equation, so the spend more-earn more equation is visible), the overwhelming effort serves to discourage implementation. The answer to this challenge may just be the postcard.

Why Use Postcards?

The postcard offers a viable solution because it affords a number of advantages while not presenting the counter-balancing disadvantages. Consider the following:

1. **Postcards are All Around Less Expensive** – the designing and printing of postcards is relatively inexpensive as their size allows for lower per-card costs as when compared to larger pieces. Similarly, postcards are less expensive to mail as the per-card postage is lower than other size mailers. Postcards can still be mailed first class, meaning you get the speedy delivery without the associated full cost.
2. **People Read Postcards** – perhaps the most important reason to use a postcard is that it is effective. People do not find postcards to be as intrusive and annoying as junk mail and their open format (no envelope to open) means it is simple to glance. This converts to a significantly higher rate of exposure.
3. **Postcards can be Designed** – the postcard is a relatively flexible format that can feature both graphics and copy and allow for the communication of both message and offer.
4. **Postcards are Easy to Use** – even if you are your own in-house mailing department, postcards are easy because there is not folding or envelope stuffing involved. They need only to be printed, addressed, stamped and sent.

Designing Great Postcards

The design of effective postcards can follow the rules you would adhere to if you were designing an advertisement. You would:

- Begin with a large headline that serves to attract attention and begin to stimulate interest.
- Then you would use a sub-headline, smaller in size, to bridge the transition from the headline to the body of the postcard. In many cases this sub-headline is used to convey an aspect of the offer, so that together with the primary headline, you have communicated both benefit/need and the offer all within the first two lines.
- Then you would present the copy, which expands on both the benefit/need of the product or service you are selling and the offer you are proposing and why this offer is worthy of attention and response.
- Finally you want to make certain that the image you are using serves to reinforce and convey your overall message so that the copy and the image compliment one another and serve to support the overall purpose of the communication.

The designing of a great postcard also includes the way in which the card is produced. It is recommended that you not seek to save a bit of money by opting to use less expensive paper. People are used to a certain consistency to a postcard and the use of cheap paper will only serve to lessen the perceived value of your campaign and therefore weaken the results it generates. Additionally, you should use full color unless the nature and character of your campaign naturally lends itself to black and white. Keep in mind that the postcard, like all your marketing materials comes to serve as a reflection on your company and the standards it embraces. If you use black and white or thin paper the recipients may conclude that you skimp on other things too, like quality or service. You want to communicate an image and in most cases that image is best transmitted through a quality, full color postcard.

Another cost saving option to avoid is the size of the card. You should not go with the smaller size card, but rather the standard size. The idea that the smaller size will somehow differentiate you from the other cards being sent is merely an effort on your part to find a legitimate marketing justification to go with the cheaper card. You know better. Differentiation is only powerful and worthy of pursuit if the differentiating factor is perceived by the recipient market as an advantage. Using a smaller sized postcard offers no such perception.

The entire purpose of your postcard is to remind your customer base and potential customer base of the outstanding opportunity you provide to either resolve a problem they have or meet a need/desire they have. But, bottom line, your postcard should be designed to drive a sale. To make certain you maximize the chances this will happen always remember to:

- Include information on how you can be contacted (phone number and website).
- Include some sort of special offer (either a discount or other incentive) that is unique to the card. This will serve as a call to action, create a sense of urgency, and also allow you to track the card's efficacy.
- Include a call to action. Remember people are overwhelmed by the marketing communications thrown at them daily. Your message needs to inform them that your postcard is not only for informational purposes, but requires an action on their part (such as making a call or visiting a website or location).

Most businesses overlook the postcard as a tool for communications because they see its size as being inconsistent with the volume they deem needed to blast through all the

marketing noise competing for someone's attention. But just as the old commercial used to say, sometimes when you want someone's attention a whisper is more effective than a shout. The fact that postcards are non-intrusive and can be viewed with no effort makes them a whisper that can turn into a shout. Now all you have to do is make certain you're quietly shouting at the right market.

Ofer Kahane works with Tudog in Israel.



CREATING GREAT ADVERTISEMENTS

By Ilan Sarid

There is no longer a debate over the necessity of advertising or its value as a tool for raising awareness and creating interest in a company and its products/services. The challenge with advertising has always been the construction of ads that best communicate not only the product/services characteristics and the business proposition, but also the character and values of the company. Most challenging for those creating the ads is the need to develop a communications piece that finds its audience and breaks through the clutter of communications that are being thrown at buyers very day in massive quantities.

Tudog has identified 10 rules ad developers can follow to make sure their ad has a competitive edge in the race for attention. They are:

1. **Make Your Ad Quick & Simple to Digest** – people work hard and most of the time this includes some degree of thinking, so when it comes to interacting with an advertisement we may not want to kick our analytical powers into gear. Therefore an ad should be easy to understand without the need to ponder its meaning. If the ad can't be completely understood in 5 seconds, rip it up and create a new one.
2. **Make the Headline a Draw** – like everything else, we need to be selective with the ads we are exposed to. If your headline does not draw the reader into the remainder of the ad, there is an excellent chance they will simply pass right by it.
3. **Make the Sub-Header Engaging** – remember the purpose of your ad is to raise awareness and create interest in whatever it is you are selling. Unless it is a direct sale ad – meaning that the purchase can (and from your perspective should) be made directly from the ad – the ad itself is not a sales piece. It is a marketing piece and it needs to inform and entice. With this in mind, your sub-header needs to be engaging to the point that it shares something about the ad that will create interest, such as the offer (a savings opportunity) or the benefit or need your product addresses.
4. **Don't Jump Right into Selling** – while it is true that ads have limited space and that they need to communicate simply and quickly, it is also true that the better ads don't jump into selling. They tell the reader about the product and present the offer, but they do not leave the reader with the feeling that they are being sold. Rather, it is far more effective to leave the reader with the sense that they are being informed. Therefore you need to make sure that your transition from the headers to the body of the ad is smooth and not overpowering.

5. **Let Them Know the Deal** – if the first part of your ad does what it is supposed to and raises the interest of the reader, then the remaining task of the ad is to let them know what the deal is – as in how much it costs or where it can be viewed and purchased, or what steps need to be taken to purchase this amazing product/service. You have to give them something because without it they will simply do nothing.

6. **Don't be Afraid to Seduce** – seduction in this sense has nothing to do with sex (sorry if I have disappointed you). Seduction means making them want you. Don't be afraid to get them to want you by composing copy that sings your praises and graphics that demonstrate just how desirable your product really is.

7. **Create a Bit of Urgency** – there are some ads that make the reader think that it will self destruct mission impossible style in 30 seconds. This is a bit too much urgency. On the other hand, we know that people are by nature procrastinators and we don't want to give them the chance to want to buy our product and simply not get around to it. Therefore, the inclusion of some urgency is advisable and even necessary. This can be achieved through a "limited time only" offer or a "while supplies last" message.

8. **Focus on Benefits** – let's always remember why we buy things: we either need it or want it. It's that simple. Your product/service either solves a problem or satisfies a desire. Play this up. It goes right to the heart of the buy decision.

9. **Make a Promise** – let's face it, we're all pretty jaded when it comes to advertisements and the claims being made by marketers. We've all been taken advantage of in one way or another by claims that are either downright untrue or worded in such a way to lead us to misunderstand (so we conclude a benefit exists while the marketer is in the clear because it was not stated outright, but rather implied). All this lying has led us to shut so many ads we see out. The way back in is through a promise that you make and - get this – actually keep. By making a promise you will soften the resistance a bit by giving the impression that you will back up your word. By actually honoring your promise you build the reputation you need to sustain this and future ads. Your promise can come in the way of a guarantee or some other pledge that takes the risk out of believing the claims you are making in your ad.

10. **Go with Great Graphics** – there are two things to remember when integrating graphics with copy in your ad; first, be certain that the graphics serve to compliment and reinforce the copy and that there is a logical connection between the two, and second, make sure the graphics are about the product and not your company. You do not want the company logo, for example, overshadowing the product.

Advertisements are the only real way companies have to let their customers know what they are selling. Luckily, advertisements are also the primary way consumers have to know what their options are. This makes us all interested in viewing certain ads that coincide with our interests and needs. The trick then is to pick the people with the pre-existing need and interest and to target them with ads that are informative, perhaps entertaining, and certainly believable.

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CHOOSING A DOMAIN NAME

By David Feingersch

The centrality of the Internet as a source of information and commerce has led to an unexpected and complicated dilemma as companies seeking to secure website URLs that accurately reflect the names of their company and aren't too complicated to remember are finding that the URLs of their choice are almost always already reserved and unavailable.

This has led to a new science of sorts – the selection of a domain name. The choice of which domain name to use is a marketing decision and should be approached from a marketing perspective. The restricted availability may mean that other changes in the marketing need to be made to accommodate the URL and provide the company with some consistency. For example, there are instances where a company's name is already reserved as a URL and so the company selects instead a URL that focuses on its industry, its product, or even its marketing slogan. All of these are acceptable alternatives, but need to be properly integrated into the overall marketing plan so that the URL becomes memorable.

In considering a domain name Tudog recommends you do the following:

1. **Clarify the Purpose** – there are different uses for domain names and depending on your intended use you may find that your options are broader (or conversely narrower) than you originally anticipated. If your domain is to serve as the main point of entry into your website then you need to be certain that the name somehow reflects your company, either by including its name in the URL or some other element that allows people to make the logical association with your company. On the other hand, if the domain name is a sub section of your website or a sales page, you have a bit more leeway, as the domain name can be more focused on the specific purpose of the page of the kind of offering being presented. The rule, however, is to determine what you need the domain name for and then be certain that the name you select meets that purpose.
2. **Benefits are Good** – if you can't secure the domain name of your company or an acronym that reflects your name, your next best bet is either something having to do with your industry or some sort of benefit you deliver. Even better is the combination of the two. So if, for example, you had a discount book company called All Books, and you found that the domain name allbooks was taken in the configurations you want (.com, .net, etc.), you could then seek out a name that describes what you do and what your distinctive competence is, such as everybookcheap.com.

3. **Include a Keyword** – in the online world the name of the game is traffic and the way to make sure traffic is coming to your website you need to be certain your domain is popping up on the search engines when someone searches for something within your category. One way to be sure that you will rank higher than others (without buying keywords) is to include a keyword in your domain name. So, if you sell shoes and your domain name includes the word “shoes” you will organically rank higher in the search engines than a shoes website that does not have the word “shoe” in their domain name.

4. **Keep it Short** – it is important to keep in mind that you want people to remember your domain name so that they can visit it. Long names are more difficult to remember, especially if they are not the names of a company or product. It is best to try to find a shorter name that is easier to remember. It is important though that it not be a random sound or mix of letters that people will find difficult to recall when they decide to visit your website.

5. **Go Dot Com** – once upon a time there was dot com and then there was dot net and then suddenly there were a whole slew of other dots (dot tv for example) that came along and broadened the scope of the domain names available. Even with these additional options it is still much better to get the dot com, even if it means compromising on the name you want. The other suffixes have not caught on, with the possible exception of dot net (and dot org for organizations and dot gov for government agencies).

6. **Consider Buying the Dot Net Too** – the proliferation of other suffixes has led to some confusion in the marketplace as people intending to go to one website sometimes end up at another. If you own both the dot com and dot net of your domain name you will substantially reduce the risk of someone landing at the wrong site when they sought to come to yours. The other suffixes have yet to gain the momentum required to demand control of them as well, so for now the dot com and dot net are enough.

The selection of a domain name is a critical part of today’s marketing paradigm and needs to be viewed as the integral part of your planning and execution that it has become. The idea of operating a business today without a website that is at least informative in nature is absurd, and so too is having a domain name that is disconnected or irrelevant to the name of your company or its purpose and mission. The crowded environment in the dot com arena means that you need to find a name that is both distinctive enough that it has not yet been taken and also easy enough that it can be remembered. These are sometimes tasks at the opposite side of the spectrum. It is your job to unite them. Having a great domain name is part of a great web presence. And having a great web presence is part of succeeding in today’s business world.

David Feingersch works with Tudog in Florida.